

Report Card Guide for Families



Dear Families,

The Amherst and Pelham Elementary Schools are transitioning to updated report cards. These report cards were developed over several years through an extensive process involving input from staff and families. They were used last year in some classrooms across the district and the feedback from families was used to make additional revisions.

The previous report cards had been in use for many years and were no longer aligned to state learning standards and current instructional practices in our schools. These new report cards will better inform students and families of student progress and make it easier for families to communicate with their child's teachers to help students achieve important learning goals and habits of school success.

This handbook is intended to provide information to families about the new report cards. It is important to note that report cards are only one form of communication, and every family is encouraged to be in regular contact with their child's teachers.

As part of this report card revision process, the district would like your feedback so that we can make further revisions this summer. There are several ways to provide feedback. Please feel free to choose the one that works best for you:

- Go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Reportcardsfamily>
- Use the QR code to the right with your phone or other QR code reader to go directly to the online survey:
- Complete the enclosed paper copy of the survey and return it to your child's teacher or the school office, along with the report card envelope.



Thank you in advance for completing the survey. Your input will be extremely valuable as we continue to improve upon the elementary report cards.

“Grading” on the New Report Card

The descriptors used to indicate student progress are:

Explanation of Progress	
These descriptors are used to indicate an individual student’s progress toward achieving the standard expected by the end of the student's current grade level.	
4	Meeting the Standard: Student is demonstrating independent understanding of the content, concepts, and skills.
3	Approaching the Standard: Student is progressing toward understanding the content, concepts, and skills and may access support in class.
2	Emerging: Student is beginning to understand the content, concepts, and skills. The student regularly requires support in class.
1	Not Yet: Student is not yet demonstrating understanding of the content, concepts, and skills.
N/A	Not Assessed at this time.

The descriptors are intended to allow teachers to consider a student’s progress toward achieving the standards listed on the report card. While the standard is an end of the year goal, the progress at mid-year indicates a student’s current understanding and path toward meeting the given standard.

The descriptors will not always be perfect in indicating everything that a teacher wants to communicate. For that reason, teachers may also use the Comments section of the report card to provide additional information.

Frequently Asked Questions

How are standards-based report cards helpful to families and teachers?

The standards-based report card is intended to provide clearer information with regard to each student's progress toward meeting grade-level expectations. It is not meant to compare one student to another, but rather to provide information about strengths and challenges with regard to the academics and social/emotional progress at the student's grade level. The report card should also promote more detailed and meaningful communication between school staff and families.

How were the standards on the report card developed?

The academic standards on the report card are based on the standards in the [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](#) for each academic subject. The Habits of School Success standards were developed in consultation with the [CASEL Core Competencies](#).

Can a student receive a 4 in January and then a 3 in June?

Yes. Expectations naturally increase as students move through the school year. Thus, it is possible for a student to receive a 4 in January indicating that they are “demonstrating independent understanding” at that time. The same student could encounter new challenges and receive a 3 at the end of the second semester because they are no longer demonstrating the same level of independent understanding.

Why might my child receive a 1 (Not Yet) on their report card?

The “Not Yet” descriptor is intended to be used in a situation in which a standard has been taught while the student was present, but the teacher has not yet seen evidence of understanding on the part of the student.

What does N/A (Not Assessed) mean on the report card?

“Not Assessed” is intended to be used for several reasons:

- for standards that are taught later in the year;
- in cases in which a student does not receive instruction in this area from the classroom teacher (i.e., the student receives instruction in a substantially separate setting);
- For standards that were taught at a time when the student was not enrolled (e.g., the topic was taught in October, but the student did not enroll until December).

The numbers on the old report cards went in the opposite order. Why did the district change this?

The order of the numbers was determined based on feedback from teachers in grades that take the MCAS. It is the opposite order of the numbers on the old report card, but is aligned with MCAS-related rubrics, which teachers felt would provide greater consistency and clarity for families, students, and staff.

Is a 4 the same as an A on a report card?

No. In fact, we experimented with systems that used different abbreviations, but all seemed confusing or took up too much space. It is very important to keep in mind the descriptors when looking at your child's report card. The number, and its associated description, will provide much more information than a traditional A-F report card.

Standards-Based Report Cards and Students with IEPs

Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) must be provided with the same opportunity to receive feedback in relation to their progress toward meeting grade level standards. Students who receive accommodations as a result of their IEPs may receive special services or supports, or the means by which they demonstrate mastery may be modified, but the content of the standards remains the same. It is only if the IEP Team has modified the grade level standard (and this is written into the IEP) that a student should be assessed on different content than their peers.

Students with IEPs will also receive Special Education Progress Reports under separate cover around the same time that report cards are sent home. Families should watch for these and contact their school office if they do not receive one.

Families with additional questions about report cards for students with IEPs should reach out to their child's teachers, the school principal, or the ARPS Student Services Office at 413-362-1833.

Standards-Based Report Cards and English Learners

Students for whom English is their second language are assessed on the same standards as peers at their grade level. English learners (EL) may receive the assistance of a tutor/interpreter at times and may have access to dual-language dictionaries or translation devices, but that does not change the standards on which they are assessed.

Families with additional questions about report cards for English learners should contact their child's ELL teacher, classroom teacher, or the school principal.

Other Report Cards & Progress Notes

Students who work with other teachers (Intervention, Instrumental Music, etc.) may also receive a report card or progress note from that teacher. These are usually included in the regular report card envelope.

Translations

Report cards are translated into each family's home language. If you need to change this, or need the report card translated into a different language, please contact the principal's office at your child's school and speak to one of the school secretaries.

Additional Help

For help interpreting your child's progress, or if you have additional questions about any of the content of the report card, please contact your child's teacher.